

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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INFO AMCONSUL CUIDAD JUAREZ

AMCONSUL GUADALAJARA

AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO

AMCONSUL MATAMOROS

AMCONSUL MAZATLAN

AMCONSUL MERIDA

AMCONSUL MONTERREY

AMCONSUL NUEVO LAREDO

AMCONSUL TIJUANA

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SUBJ: ABANDONMENT OF PROPOSAL TO CREATE SYSTEM OF AT
"AT LARGE" SENATORS

REF: MEXICO 9325 (PARA 5)

1. SUMMARY: OUT OF PUBLIC VIEW, SENATE APPARENTLY HAS
PERSUADED PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA TO ABANDON HIS ANNOUNCED
INTENTION OF CREATING A SYSTEM OF "AT LARGE" SENATORS,
INDICATING LEGISLATIVE OCCASIONALLY DOES EXERCISE SOME
INFLUENCE OVER EXECUTIVE BRANCH. END SUMMARY.

2. REF. REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA ANNOUNCED
INTENTION OF SENDING A PROPOSAL TO THE MWCAN CONGRESS
WHICH WOULD CREATE A SYSTEM OF "AT LARGE" SENATORS SIMILAR
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TO THE "AT LARGE" DEPUTY SYSTEM IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

LATTER SYSTEM PROVIDES THAT MINORITY PARTIES RECEIVING MINIMUM OF 1.5 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS ARE ENTITLED (IN ADDITION TO SEATS WON OUTRIGHT) TO 5 SEATS IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, PLUS ONE SEAT FOR EACH ADDITIONAL 0.5 PERCENT OF THE VOTES POLLED, UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 25 SEATS FOR EACH PARTY.

3. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT WON FAVORABLE COMMENT FROM THE PRESS, THE PPS (POPULAR SOCIALIST PARTY) THE PARM (AUTHENTIC PARTY OF MEXICAN REVOLUTION) AND QUARDED SUPPORT FROM THE PAN (PARTY OF NATIONAL ACTION), SEVERAL SENATROS OPPOSED IDEA, GRUMBLING THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES OUGHT TO HAVE TO WIN THE SEATS OUTRIGHT. SINCE EARLY NOVEMBER THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE OR NO PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE IDEA.

4. ON NOV. 18 LIC. ALEJANDRO CARRILLO MARCOR, SENATOR FROM SONORA AND DIRECTOR OF SEMI-OFFICIAL PAPER EL NACIONAL, TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE EXECUTIVE WOULD NOT SEND SUCH A PROPOSAL TO THE CONGRESS. CARRILLO SAID "WE" TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT THE PROPOSAL WOULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL, SINCE IT WOULD VIOLATE THE CONCEPT (PRESENT IN MEXICAN CONSTITUTIONS SINCE 1824) THAT SENATORS REPRESENT SOVEREIGN STATES WHICH HAVE JOINED FREELY IN A FEDERAL REPUBLIC. SENATORS, CARRILLO SAID, UNLIKE DEPUTIES, REPRESENT STATES, NOT PEOPLE; TO HAVE INTRODUCED "AT LARGE" SENATORS WOULD HAVE BROKEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL NORM OF TWO SENATORS PER STATE. ASKED IF IT WASN'T UNUSUAL THAT THE PRESIDENT PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THE PROPOSAL PRIOR TO CONSULTATION WITH THE SENATE, CARRILLO SAID THAT WAS LESS UNUSUAL THAN THE SENATE'S PERSUADING THE PRESIDENT NOT TO SEND THE MEASURE AT ALL. HOWEVER, CARRILLO WENT ON TO CITE SENATE MODIFICATION (IN 70 INSTANCES) OF AN EXECUTIVE PROPOSED LAW ON AGRICULTURAL SANITATION AS AN EXAMPLE OF SLOWLY INCREASING CONGRESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE. CARRILLO ALSO GAVE INSTANCE OF SENATE INITIATIVE WHICH BECAME LAW (TWO YEARS AGO). ASKED ABOUT SENATE ROLE IN MODIFYING FISCAL REFORM PACKAGE, CARRILLO ACKNOWLEDGED OPPOSITION IN SENATE (ALL SENATORS ARE PRI MEMBERS) BUT VOLUNTEERED NO FURTHER COMMENT.

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5. COMMENT: ECHEVERRIA'S ANNOUNCEMENT, BURIED IN AN OTHERWISE UNEVENTFUL SPEECH COMMEMORATING THE LATE PRESIDENTS' CALLES AND CARDENAS, WAS MADE WITHOUT FANFARE, BUT NONETHELESS PRODUCED HEADLINES AND A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC INTEREST FOR A WEEK OR SO. ALTHOUGH THE EXECUTIVE NO DOUBT COULD HAVE FORCED THE CONGRESS TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AND TO PASS THE INITIATIVE, THAT IT DID NOT

CHOOSE TO DO SO PROBABLY INDICATES A LACK OF DEEP COMMITMENT
TO THE IDEA AS WELL AS A DESIRE TO AVOID ANY PUBLIC
DISCREPANCIES WITHIN THE PRI. TO A LIMITED EXTENT,
AND UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, (E.G. AS LONG AS IT'S HANDED
OUT OF PUBLIC VIEW) MEXICO'S NORMALLY RUBBER STAMP CONGRESS
CAN EXERCISE INFLUENCE OVER THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.
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